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FEB 05 2003

FCC - MAIL ROOM

Dear FCC Chairman Powell:

Regarding the FCC's Docket Number 02-277, the Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast ownership rules:

At a time when our country is preparing for war, perhaps no action could be so patriotic as to focus on the freedoms we want to protect. One of those is freedom of speech. To me, that means the freedom to listen to a diversity of voices and views.

In recent years, as the requirements for broadcast licensing became less stringent, the voices we have been able to listen to have become more and more uniform, in their content and their sound. In fact, some are just the same voices over and over, using different names. These are the results of having a few large conglomerates own most of the broadcasting and news facilities and a lot of corporate intermarriage.

As you consider releasing the broadcast owners from even more regulations, making it easier to own radio, tv and newspaper outlets simultaneously and often in the same markets, I would ask you to think about what this does to our democracy and our economy.

Gone are the days when some odd-looking, whiny-sounding singer with a lot to say can be heard by turning on the radio. Little by little the record companies, also owned by giant corporations, are screening them out. Then there are the consultants and the music lists and the program directors who fear for their jobs if the numbers go down. Thus, much of the music we hear is manufactured by corporations like Disney - Britney Spears is a good example. Nothing against Ms. Spears, but she is an example of somebody's fantasy of what music in America should be like and she is packaged and sold like a box of cereal. What follows are sound-a-likes and act-a-likes and ultimately, in her young audience, think-a-likes.

Speaking of think-a-likes, allowing one person, a Rupert Murdoch for instance, to control as many broadcast outlets as he can buy, is a threat to our democracy. It means all we will hear or see or read, sometimes in the majority of a major market, will be his opinion of what we should hear or see or read. It invites control, dare I say it mind-control.

Isn't being controlled by other cultures exactly what we are fighting against? Terrorism is about control. If the people in our nation cease to think independently, we are ripe for control and ripe for a takeover. There are innovative ideas that can help save our democracy in places besides the top of the government food chain. But we will never hear or experience them if our diversity of voices is squelched.

There are new ideas in governance, health, and commerce that would make us a better and a stronger nation in which to live. But if those ideas cannot be expressed because our media is owned by billionaires with no interest in what the locals think, there will be fewer jobs, little growth and no new cures for cancer.

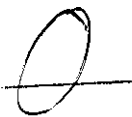
Don't let our airwaves be a series of malls from one coast to the other. Put an end to thinking like Stepford Wives and let's bring back ascertainment interviews, public service announcements, SMALL group ownerships and local voices. Suppressing the voices of the people of this country by driving over them with a steamroller will not make the dissonance go away. It's time for an end to deregulation. Opening the airwaves to the people who really own them is the only way to have a free press and to keep our nation from becoming a country of pushovers, who might collapse if, heaven forbid, there is ever another 9-11.

Sincerely,



Beth Blakeman

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